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ABSTRACT

Noting the increased interest in the use of group approaches, the author discusses the rationale: that human beings are social beings whc grow and develcp by having adequate and meaningful exposure to social situations. The therapeutic forces which can be operative in grcups are listed and the leader's awareness of them as a powerful tccl for facilitating human development is urged. Three priorities fcr schccl counselcrs are discussed: (1) collaborating and ccnsulting with groups of teachers; (2) working with grcups of students on develcpmental cr crisis-criented problems; and (3) consultation with parent groups regarding their children. The author suggests organizing grcups in terms of a new concept, the "C" group, sc named because the factors which make it effective begin with a "C": collaborating, consulting, confronting, clarifying, etc. The paper concludes with a discussion of the teacher as a group leader, developing his knowledge of group procedures to enhance his effectiveness. (IL)

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GROUP APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING AND CHANGING BEHAVIOR

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There is an increased interest in the utilization of group approaches throughout the Nation. This can be observed both in an increased use by professionals and in the general community. This interest has developed from the general feeling of alienation which exists between the generations and most segments of society. This has resulted in the increased use of T-groups, marathons, encounter groups, sensitivity training, group work with children and adolescents, and expanded use by teachers of group discussion procedures, and of course, the rapid development of Human Potential Institutes.

We have also noted a rapid extension and development of the literature of group approaches. A close inspection of professional literature indicates that greater attention is being paid to group procedures in most of the professional journals. Group Counseling has even added its own journal -Comparative Group Studies.

The Rationale for Group Approaches

One might question the basic reason why professionals are increasingly acknowledging the validity of group procedures. While it is true that many have been attracted to the movement on the basis of their interest in finding something which might work more effectively, it is also apparent that there are some basic reasons why group procedures are usually more efficacious. The base premise is that human beings are social beings who only grow and develop as humans by having adequate and meaningful exposure to social situations. Man is recognized as an indivisible, social, decision-making being whose actions have a social purpose (Dreikurs,1968). From this point of view the individual's style of life is always expressed in the social transactions between himself and others. The counselor has an unusual opportunity in the group situation to observe the psychological movement and the

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purpose of human behavior. Group process, then, has special value diagnostically insofar as it permits observation of human behavior and interaction. and therapeutically insofar as it contains the components which can remediate or correct the problem.

Groups provide unique assistance to their members in the form of peer encouragement. It has often been observed in a group that while it is valuable to have the leader encourage a group member, it is most potent when one member is able to encourage another.

The group, then, provides a broader mirror of human behavior than the counselor might provide by himself. The group is able to help the member gain a deeper insight into his values, purposes, and feelings. Group members also provide a more varied resource for investigating alternatives than a single counselor. The group provides an opportunity for each member to be a therapeutic agent for every other individual. The group setting is unique in our society insofar as it provides the opportunity to express altruism and to actually give as well as receive love.

When group approach is based upon a socio-teleological understanding of human behavior, it recognizes that most problems are primarily social and interpersonal. These problems are best solved in the social setting. Groups provide an opportunity to engage in reality testing in a social laboratory. All behavior has social meaning and it best understood in its social context. Thus, the life style and character are always expressed and revealed through the psychological movement and transactions which occur between the group members.

From the Adlerian frame of reference, belonging is man's basic need. Man is not actualized until he feels accepted and belongs. The group provides the opportunity to give and take, to cooperate, and to stimulate one's social interest.

Therapeutic Forces in the Group

The group leader must be cognizant of the mechanisms which occur in the group and their affect upon group members. It is his responsibility to create a climate and an interaction which will promote self understanding, growth, and change. It is through the leader's knowledge of the therapeutic forces in the group and his ability to use these forces for growth that the essential competencies for effective leadership emerge (Dinkmeyer/Muro, 1971).

It is not the purpose of this article to describe group mechanisms in detail, but to suggest that each group leader needs to be aware of some of the following mechanisms:

1. Acceptance
2. Ventilation
3. Reality Testing
4. Transference
5. Intellectualization and Feedback
6. Interaction
7. Universalization
8. Altruism
9. Spectator Therapy (Dinkmeyer & Muro, 1971).

Through a study of group dynamics, as the leader becomes aware of the group forces, he then has available a powerful tool for facilitating human development.

The Place of Group Process in Counseling

The counselor must always establish some hierarchy in regard to the services that he provides. Either he develops some priorities of his own or he is the victim of decisions that are made by others. It is my belief that group process skills are one of the basic skills of the school counselor. These skills must be made available to a range of clients including administration, teachers, parents and students. Although

the primary growth target is the child, the counselor recognizes that in many instances he serves the child more effectively by group work with significant adults.

I am suggesting that counselors in the schools might develop the following list of priorities. However, priorities will always be based on individual situations in counselor skills:

1. Collaborating and consulting with groups of teachers.

Teacher groups are a new, interesting, and dynamic approach to educational problems. Teacher groups are designed to provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate and work together to solve specific problems of students and teachers, and to develop more meaningful transactions in the educational setting. It has been demonstrated that this approach to working with teachers can be some of the most dynamic work that occurs in the school. It provides a unique opportunity for teachers to grow while increasing their skills in understanding human behavior and themselves (Dinkmeyer, n.d.).

2. Working with groups of students on either their developmental or crisis-oriented problems. Focus in the group approach is on working with as many children as might benefit from this type of group experience.

3. Consultation with parents in groups focuses on developing a better understanding of more effective ways to relate with their children.

The "C" Group

The teacher and parent groups are organized in terms of a new concept, the "C" group. The "C" group grew out of an attempt to combine didactic material which talked about different ways to relate to students with an experience which enables the adult to understand what kept him from adopting the new procedure. If we are to help persons change, we must have access to affective as well as cognitive domains However, although we have recognized this in some instances with students, we have not acknowledged it in connection with our work with teachers and parents.

It was found that teacher growth is best facilitated through group experiences where one became aware of the effect of self upon behavior. This approach was labeled the "C" group because most of the factors which made it effective began with a "c": collaborating, consulting, clarifying, confronting, being concerned, caring, being confidential, and being committed to bringing about change. (Dinkmeyer/Muro, 1971).

The Teacher as a Group Leader

Counselors must begin to share their knowledge of group procedures with teachers. The teacher is always involved with a group, even though she is not trained to lead groups. It is essential that she know group procedures which help her to deal with classroom organization, discipline and the general instructional aspects of guidance. It is obvious that group procedures have considerable potency in dealing with a number of our most basic educational problems (Dreikurs, 1968; Glasser, 1969).

It has been my experience in working with teachers in classroom guidance programs that with adequate training teachers can operate most effectively as group discussion leaders. Experience with the DUSO program (Dinkmeyer, 1970) has demonstrated that teachers can develop effective group procedures with students which enable them to work more effectively with the affective and motivational components of the learning situation.

Groups, whether led by counselors or teachers, work most effectively when the leader has competency in some of the following areas:

1. He shows the group he cares and is concerned with developing a relationship of mutual respect.

2. He makes sure that group members understand the purpose of the meeting.

3. He senses the group atmosphere and is willing to discuss what is happening in the here and now. He deals with both the expressed and unexpressed messages.

4. He links the thoughts and feelings of group members, pointing out the similarities and differences in the attitudes and feelings being discussed.

5. He encourages silent members to participate when they are ready.

6. He is able to detect feelings and attitudes which are implied but not expressed.

7. He is able to help the children express their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes through clarifying, restating and summarizing.

8. The leader helps members to summarize and evaluate what they have learned by a simple summary statement which might ask, "What do you think you learned about yourself and others today?"

This article was designed to show how the group process can be effectively utilized in every aspect of the counseling and guidance program. It challenges counselors to use group procedures more dynamically in the schools.

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